

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 11

Godly Contentment

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:17
Subject:	what you should not covet
Complement:	your neighbor's spouse, servants or property.
Exegetical idea:	You should not covet your neighbor's spouse, servants or property.
Homiletical idea:	You are a child of the King!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to be content no matter what their condition in this life because they are children of the King!

Introduction

Do you remember those IQ test questions where you had a list of items or numbers and you had to choose the one that didn't match the others? Here's an example: Dog, Cat, Lamb, Horse. Which one doesn't match? The answer is... Lamb. To match, it would need to be dog, cat, sheep, horse. Here's another IQ test question: 4 numbers. Which one doesn't match the rest? 6,9,15, 20. That's a little more difficult. 6,9,15, 20. The answer is 20. The other 3 numbers are divisible by 3.

Now try this IQ test question based on the 10 commandments. Which one of these commandments doesn't match the others? Do not kill. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not covet. The correct answer is: Do not covet. If you aren't sure why that's the correct answer, listen carefully. You should find the answer to that question sometime during the sermon!

Let's examine the 10th commandment, the 10th word of blessing from our loving God, recorded in Exodus 20:17. Remember that all of these sayings are prefaced by the words, "I am the LORD your God who brought you out..." I am the LORD your God who delivered you! Let's look at the 10th commandment. Exodus 20:17. "You shall not covet your neighbor's

house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

You may be surprised to discover that the Hebrew word in Exodus 20:17, translated “covet” in most English translations, is not an inherently negative word. The Hebrew verb *chamad* simply means “to desire” or “to have delight in.” This same Hebrew verb *chamad* is used in Isaiah 53:2 in reference to the coming Messiah. We read in Isaiah 53:2, that there was “nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.” KJV–“there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

So the Hebrew verb *chamad*, in itself is not inherently positive or negative. It simply means “to desire,” “to delight in.” It is the context that tells us whether this is an appropriate desire or an inappropriate desire. Let’s look again at Exodus 20:17.

“.....” What is it about the context here in the 10th commandment that makes this an inappropriate desire? Exactly! This is your neighbor’s wife. Your neighbor’s house. Your neighbor’s servants.

The 10th commandment tells us, “Do not have an inappropriate desire for someone or something that belongs to someone else.” Let’s look at 3 references where this Hebrew verb conveys the meaning of an inappropriate desire for someone or something. Two statements and one story. The first statement is found in Proverbs 6:25. “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.” KJV–“Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.”

What is the context here? An inappropriate desire for another man’s wife. The translators try to capture the negative connotation by translating this same verb *chamad* “do not

lust in your heart” rather than simply “do not desire.” Clearly, in this context, *chamad* is an inappropriate desire for someone.

A second statement: Micah 2:2. “They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.” Again, the context is negative. The text literally reads, “They desire fields and seize them.” But because this is an inappropriate desire for something that belongs to someone else, the translators use the word “covet.”

And now a third reference, but this time a story where the same Hebrew verb *chamad* is used in a negative context. Joshua 7:21. “When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.” “I coveted them—there’s the Hebrew verb *chamad*. The same verb found in the 10th commandment. “I desired them.”

What is the context of this story? Who is speaking? Achan. Who was Achan? One of the children of Israel? What had he done? Taken some gold, silver, and a beautiful Babylonian robe when Jericho was conquered. You say, “What’s wrong with that? That is the plunder of war!” Why was it an inappropriate desire for Achan to want to take gold, silver and a garment from Jericho? Does anyone know the answer to that question? Listen to the instructions that Joshua had given to the Israelites prior to the fall of Jericho. Joshua 6:17-18. “The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise

you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it.”

Achan ignored that instruction. He allowed an inappropriate desire to gain a stronghold in his mind, and that inappropriate desire led to inappropriate action. And that inappropriate action resulted in the death of 36 men at the battle of Ai. And eventually, that inappropriate desire resulted in Achan’s own death and the death of his family. You can read the story in Joshua chapters 6 and 7.

So the Hebrew verb *chamad* in a negative context means to have an inappropriate desire, and that inappropriate desire, if left unchecked, will lead to an inappropriate action. That’s why the 10th commandment is actually a word of blessing from our loving God: do not have an inappropriate desire for your neighbor’s wife or anything that is your neighbor’s. Why? Because inappropriate desire will lead to inappropriate action.

Did you notice the difference between the 10th commandment and all of the other 9 commandments? The first nine commandments deal with outward action. The 10th commandment deals with an inner attitude. Do not have an inappropriate desire towards your neighbor’s spouse or anything that is your neighbor’s.

According to the apostle Paul, the 10th commandment is the most challenging of all! Listen to Paul’s words to the Romans, recorded in Romans 7:7-8. “I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire.”

Paul might have thought that he was doing quite well outwardly. He was remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy. He wasn’t stealing. He wasn’t committing adultery. But when he came to the 10th commandment, he realized that his inappropriate desires brought him under

condemnation. No matter how good he looked on the outside, God saw the thoughts and intents of his heart. Paul knew the truth of Psalmist David's words, recorded in Psalm 139:1-3: "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways."

We may fool people most of the time. We might even fool ourselves some of the time. But we can't fool God. People look at the outside, but God looks at the heart. God notices not only our outward actions but also our inner attitudes.

Paul recognized that the 10th commandment presented him with the greatest challenge of all. Listen to his struggle, recorded in that same chapter of Romans. Romans 7:14-20, 24-25.

"....."

How are we set free from the tyranny of inappropriate desires? Only through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Paul joyfully declared in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" And the apostle John testified that "to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12

When we have received Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are children of the King! We are a new creation. We walk in newness of life. I'm not saying that a Christian will never be tempted to yield to inappropriate desires. But I am saying that you do not need to be tyrannized by them. Sin will not be your master. Sin will not have dominion over you. Romans 6:14 You can choose by the power of God's indwelling Spirit to live differently. Not to earn God's love and favor, but because you are a redeemed child of God!

You are a child of the King. Hallelujah! You can pray with new enthusiasm, “Your kingdom come!” Because you are a child of the King. Whether you have a lot of material wealth, or a little, whether you live in a mansion or a cottage, whether you have many people who serve you or whether you occupy a humble position in this life....you are a child of the King! No one can take your new identity away from you.

And that joyful realization that you are a child of the King leads to godly contentment. Listen to the testimony of the apostle Paul to the Christians in Philippi. Philippians 4:10-12. “I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.”

And what is the secret for being content in any and every situation? Read on, Philippians 4:13. “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” Paul was a child of the King! Jesus gave Paul contentment no matter what situation he found himself in. Paul was a child of the King.

Listen to the words of the apostle Paul to young Timothy: 1 Timothy 6:6-10. “godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

Paul had probably lived in a fairly affluent family as a child. He received an excellent education. He was well respected by the religious leaders of his community. But he gladly gave up everything to follow Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. Paul knew that while he might not have much in this world, that this world was not his home. He was just passing through. His treasures were laid up somewhere beyond the blue. Paul knew that “the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” 1 Thess 4:16-17

What a glorious day that will be! Jesus will return as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will return in all of His glory, surrounded by the holy angels. What a glorious day that will be because we are children of the King! Hallelujah. You are a child of the King. I am a child of the King.

We will look up with joy and say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9 And we will rejoice together, because we are children of the King.

So don't be consumed with inappropriate desires. I know that you are bombarded by all kinds of advertizing. I know that you are bombarded by Hollywood hype. But remember who you are. You are a child of the King! This world is not your home. You're just passing through. This is not your final resting place. You are a child of the King.

The day is coming, and I believe that is will be soon, when we will hear these words: “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and

God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”

Let that blessed hope fill you with godly contentment today! No matter what your circumstances. You are a child of the King!

Harriet Buell expressed godly contentment in these words:

I once was an outcast stranger on earth,
A sinner by choice and an alien by birth;
But I’ve been adopted; my name’s written down
An heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown.

A tent or a cottage, why should I care”
They’re building a palace for me over there!
Though exiled from home, yet still I may sing:
All glory to God, I’m a child of the King.

I’m a child of the King, a child of the King
With Jesus my Savior, I’m a child of the King!

When you’re tempted to yield to inappropriate desires, thinking that you need more things so you can be somebody, or more power so you can be somebody, or someone else’s treasure so that you can be somebody, remember that contentment is found in knowing who you

really are. You are a child of the King.

I have something to give you today, whether you're here on campus, or watching via our web church or via TV...I have something to give you today to remind you of who you are! You are a child of the King. So we've made a Forest Lake Church business card for you. Like this one! Well, actually, it's not this big, but it looks just like this one. It has a place for you to write your name, and it says "Child of the King!" Whether you are 5 years old or 105 years old, I want you to have one of these Forest Lake Church business cards. You can write your name on it, right next to "Child of the King." Then you can put it in your Bible. Put it in your wallet. Put it in your purse. Put it on your bulletin board.

And when you feel like you're being bombarded by the advertizing of our culture, when you feel like you're being seduced by Madison Avenue, take out that Forest Lake Church business card and remind yourself—I'm a child of the King!

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Tim. 1:17